
John Allen Chalk: Personal Correspondence

John Allen Chalk

12-11-1970

From/To: Glenn Chapman (Chalk's reply filed first)

Glenn Chapman

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**HARDING**
U N I V E R S I T Y

December 11, 1970

Mr. Glenn Chapman
1504 West Fern
Redlands, California 92373

Dear Glenn:

After reading your letter the other day I told Sue that all we had to do was change the names and the places and the situation would fit almost anywhere in the country. I talk to dozens of men almost every month who are facing the very same problems you describe in your letter. There is just no way to overestimate the damage to the man in the pew by the inadequate preaching he has heard in the past. Our people simply do not know God's Word.

I have faced the problem here, of course, in a very acute way. Not only have we had a legalistic preaching, but we have had it in the most effective manner. This means that some bad attitudes and incorrect approaches to the scripture has been not only developed, but intensified.

In the situation here I have determined to patiently preach Biblical expository lessons. This means that I have to simply get into a text and lead the members through it. I take them by the hand and almost put their finger on the verses and take them through text after text. They still, of course, find it difficult to understand and one of the biggest complaints of my preaching has been "we do not understand what he is saying." But more and more Bibles are showing up in worship services in a new and deeper way. The only solution I have is just to discipline one's self not to do sensational preaching, not to preach opinions, though they be very good ones, but to forego all the pleasures of the "grandstanding" for patient unspectacular expository preaching of God's Word. I have done this so far through the gospel of Mark. We are doing it this fall through Romans and also through parts of Genesis. This summer in a series on Morality I had my greatest test when

Page 2, Mr. Glenn Chapman

through the month of July I simply chose the major morality text in the New Testament and tried to show how Paul's moral teaching arises out of his theological teaching and that everything in the New Testament regarding morality is for the man who has chosen to follow Jesus.

We miss you and think of you often. We pray that God will continue to bless you and Linda in your work there.

Your brother,

John Allen Chalk

JAC:lc

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Y

Glenn Chapman
1504 W. Fern
Redlands, Ca. 92373

Dec. 1, 1970

Dear John:

One of the greatest regrets I have about my stay in Redlands was that I never seemed to find time to follow through on all my 'good intentions' to sit down and have a long visit with you. There were many times I had several questions to ask you concerning problems one might face in the ministry, but, for some reason, I never took the time.

Right now, as I am being exposed to the sometimes harsh realities of life within a congregation, I find myself wishing I had taken the time to hear some of your ideas. Overall, the situation here at Redlands is not too bad: I have two elders and I see very nearly eye to eye on the role the church should play in the world, and many people seem quite appreciative of what I hope has been Christ-centered preaching. But there is a problem here which I think you have probably had some experience with, and I am hoping you can lay some words of wisdom on me.

The basic problem is a very legalistic approach to Xnty by the part of a sizeable segment of the congregation. The Bible is the "rulebook," and we are expected to be able to find the "pattern." I think you know the type! All this came to the surface when a returning Pepperdine student had the "audacity" to begin singing during the communion service. Several contacted a severe case of seasickness and had to leave the service immediately. The next night (we were just beginning a lecture series), Jennings Davis preached too much of a "Billy Graham" sermon on God's love, and the natives were restless once again.

Since these flare-ups, there have been numerous discussions which for the most part have served only to polarize the congregation further. Those who are really interested in knowing Jesus cannot understand the ones who take the more legalistic approach, and vice-versa.

Thus, I think you can see the nature of what to me is a very puzzling problem. I am at a total loss of how to go about ~~the~~ changing such legalistic attitudes. I suppose I have run the gamut of emotions since all this


I look back over this letter, I'm afraid I'm making it sound a little more tragic than it really is. All I really after is a chance to hear from you about how one might approach the problem of legalism.

I think my first couple of months out here have taught a great deal, primarily, that one cannot please everyone!!! I thought my preaching was being pleased by my preaching at first, but now I am beginning to hear cries of "Social Gospel" and "Back to the Bible" from the legalistic sect. At first, I was a little discouraged by it, but now I find it almost amusing (which probably isn't too great an attitude on my part) that there can be such varied reactions to one's preaching.

But a lot of great things are happening, too. When I think of all the garbage you have had to put up with, I find it hard to get too upset about things here. For people's lives are being touched by the reality of Christ, and after all, I guess that's what it's all about.

~~Keep the faith, Brother,~~

Keep the faith, Brother,


Glenn Chapman